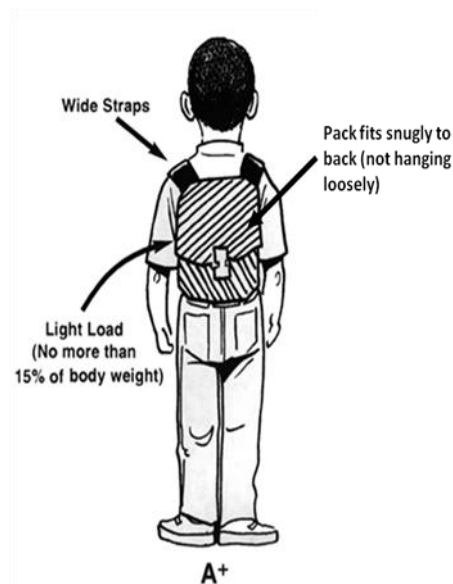




Back Packing or Spine Cracking?

Spiderman, Cinderella, Dora the Explorer, Transformers, Sponge Bob Square Pants. The backpack options are nearly endless. Of course you know which type of backpack your child would *like*, but do you know which pack is *safest* for them?

Here are some tips for proper, safe backpack use to avoid injury:



1. Choose a backpack that is appropriate for your child's size. Backpacks come in a variety of sizes. In order to prevent injury, the pack should sit about 2 inches above the child's waist with straps firmly tightened.
2. Select a pack with thickly padded straps. This will prevent discomfort because there are many nerves and blood vessels in the shoulders and neck. Always wear both straps. Slinging a heavy bag over one shoulder can cause curvature of the spine.
3. Be sure to distribute weight evenly when filling the backpack. Place the heaviest items closest to the back while light items can be placed further from the back. A backpack with a waistbelt is great to help distribute the

weight across the body. When purchasing a backpack, bring some books to the store to determine how the child carries each pack when fully loaded.

4. Do not allow your child to carry more than 15% of his or her body weight. See Table 1 to estimate the maximum weight your child should carry.
5. Roller bags sound like a safer alternative but beware! Dragging a heavy backpack often results in poor posture which can also cause injury to the spine, neck and arms. Furthermore, many schools have banned roller bags due to the tripping hazard they pose.

Table 1. Maximum Backpack Weight According to Child Weight	
User's Weight (lbs.)	Maximum Backpack Weight (lbs.)
40	6
50	7.5
75	11.25
90	13.5
120	18
150	22.5
175	26.25